DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 318 669 SO 020 785

AUTHOR Cherryholmes, Cleo H.
TITLE Political Scientists on Civic Education: A Nonexistent Discourse. Elementary Subjects Center Series, No. 15.
INSTITUTION Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, East Lansing, MI.; Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Inst. for Research on Teaching.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Feb 90
CONTRACT G0098C0226
NOTE 19p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University, 252 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($2.50).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizenship Education; *Civics; Elementary Education; Elementary School Curriculum; *Political Science; Social Scientists; *Social Studies; Teaching Methods; Values

ABSTRACT

A review of eight leading political science journals beginning with the first volume of the "American Political Science Review" in 1906 revealed no articles or statements about how elementary civic education is or should be taught. Several reasons for this omission are suggested. First, the elementary civic education curriculum was established before the American Political Science Association was founded and thus before its members could participate in designing civic education curricula. Second, after World War II political scientists began to emphasize strongly the "scientific" aspects of their inquiries as a result of the "behavioral" revolution. This excluded the possibility of supporting public or educational policies because as scientists they could not be policy advocates. Political scientists chose not to push the implicit value commitments of their disciplinary findings onto public educators and into public school classrooms. This professional reluctance notwithstanding, four ideas to consider in designing elementary civic education curricula are presented. They are: (1) students should learn about important characteristics of liberal democracy and its historical development; (2) students should learn that the development of liberal democracy in the United States has been flawed and oppressive as well as liberating and enlightening; (3) students should draw upon political scientific knowledge in the consumption and production of texts about their social and political world; and (4) students should be taught that social and political life and practices are complex, contradictory, and transitory. (Author/AS)

Elementary Subjects Center
Series No. 15

POLITICAL SCIENTISTS ON CIVIC EDUCATION: A NONEXISTENT DISCOURSE

Cleo H. Cherryholmes

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

Institute for Research on Teaching

College of Education

Michigan State University

Elementary Subjects Center
Series No. 15

POLITICAL SCIENTISTS ON CIVIC EDUCATION: A NONEXISTENT DISCOURSE

Cleo H. Cherryholmes

Published by

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects
Institute for Research on Teaching
252 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

February 1990

This work is sponsored in part by the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University. The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects is funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the Office or Department (Cooperative Agreement No. G0098C0226).

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects was awarded to Michigan State University in 1987 after a nationwide competition. Funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, the Elementary Subjects Center is a major project housed in the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT). The program focuses on conceptual understanding, higher order thinking, and problem solving in elementary school teaching of mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts. Center researchers are identifying exemplary curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in the teaching of these school subjects; studying these practices to build new hypotheses about how the effectiveness of elementary schools can be improved; testing these hypotheses through school-based research; and making specific recommendations for the improvement of school policies, instructional materials, assessment procedures, and teaching practices. Research questions include, What content should be taught when teaching for conceptual understanding and higher level learning? How do teachers concentrate their teaching to use their limited resources best? and In what ways is good teaching subject matter-specific?

The work is designed to unfold in three phases, beginning with literature review and interview studies designed to elicit and synthesize the points of view of various stakeholders (representatives of the underlying academic disciplines, intellectual leaders and organizations concerned with curriculum and instruction in school subjects, classroom teachers, state- and district-level policymakers) concerning ideal curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in these five content areas at the elementary level. Phase II involves interview and observation methods designed to describe current practice, and in particular, best practice as observed in the classrooms of teachers believed to be outstanding. Phase II also involves analysis of curricula (both widely used curriculum series and distinctive curricula developed with special emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications), as another approach to gathering information about current practices. In Phase III, test models of ideal practice will be developed based on what has been learned and synthesized from the first two phases.

The findings of Center research are published by the IRT in the Elementary Subjects Center Series. Information about the Center is included in the IRT Communication Quarterly (a newsletter for practitioners) and in lists and catalogs of IRT publications. For more information, to receive a list or catalog, or to be placed on the IRT mailing list to receive the newsletter, please write to the Editor, Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

Co-directors:	Jere E. Brophy and Penelope L. Peterson
Senior Consultant:	Andrew C. Porter
Senior Researchers:	Patricia Cianciolo, Donald Freeman, Magdalene Lampert, Wanda May, Richard Prawat, Ralph Putnam, Cheryl Rosaen, Kathleen Roth, Suzanne Wilson
Editor:	Sandra Gross
Assistant Editor:	Elizabeth V. Elliott

Abstract

A review of eight leading political science journals beginning with the first volume of the American Political Science Review in 1906 revealed no articles or statements about how elementary civic education is or should be taught. Several reasons for this are offered. First, the elementary civic education curriculum was established before the American Political Science Association was founded and thus before its members could participate in designing civic education curricula. Second, after World War II political scientists began to emphasize strongly the "scientific" aspects of their inquiries as a result of the "behavioral" revolution. This excluded the possibility of supporting public or educational policies because as scientists they could not be policy advocates. Political scientists chose not to push the implicit value commitments of their disciplinary findings onto public educators and into public school classrooms. This professional reluctance notwithstanding, the author suggests four ideas to consider in designing elementary civic education curricula.

Preface

This is one of a series of eight reports being prepared for Study 2 of Phase I of the research agenda of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. Phase I calls for surveying and synthesizing the opinions of various categories of experts concerning the nature of elementary-level instruction in mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts, with particular attention to how teaching for understanding and problem solving should be handled within such instruction. Michigan State University faculty who have made important contributions to their own disciplines were invited to become Board of Discipline members and to prepare papers describing historical developments and current thinking in their respective disciplines concerning what ought to be included in the elementary school curriculum. These papers include a sociohistorical analysis of how the discipline should be represented as an elementary school subject, what content should be taught, and the nature of the higher level thinking and problem solving outcomes that should be assessed. This paper focuses on the discipline of political science; the other seven papers focus on the disciplines of mathematics, science, geography, history, literature, art, and music.

POLITICAL SCIENTISTS ON CIVIC EDUCATION: A NONEXISTENT DISCOURSE

Cleo H. Cherryholmes[1]

Political scientists have expressed virtually no opinions, beliefs, convictions, or theories about the civic education of elementary school students. A review of eight leading political science journals beginning with the first volume of the American Political Science Review in 1906 to the present revealed no statement or guidelines about civic education by any organization of political scientists nor were any individual articles found on civic education.[2] The civic education literature has been produced, for the most part, by social studies educators, curriculum theorists and practitioners, and critical pedagogues.

Two questions about the silence of political scientists on civic education will be explored. First: What explanations can be offered for the fact that political scientists have not addressed elementary civic education? This disciplinary quietude is an anomoly when compared to the attention given to elementary education by professors of history, geography, mathematics, and English. Second, given that political science is a disciplined body of knowledge and inquiry: How might a political scientist respond to the question

---

[1]Cleo H. Cherryholmes, professor of political science at Michigan State University, is a member of the Board of Disciplines of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. The author wishes to thank Sandy Callis Bethell, a research assistant who conducted the review of the political science journals.

[2]The review included the American Political Science Review, volumes 1-89, 1906-1989; the Journal of Politics, volumes 1-51, 1939-1989; Polity, volumes 1-20, 1968-1988; the American Journal of Political Science, volumes 1-33, 1957-1989; the Western Political Quarterly, volumes 1-41, 1947-1988; the Social Science Quarterly, volumes 1-69, 1926-1988; PS, volumes 7-20, 1974-1987, and Teaching Political Science, volumes 1-14, 1973-1987.

of designing civic education? First, conceivable reasons for the silence; second, one response.

Origins of the Civic Education Curriculum and the American Political Science Association

Formal proposals for social science and humanities curricula in the United States were first suggested during the last decade of the 19th century. In 1894 the Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies of the National Education Association (NEA) was published. The NEA had charged those academic disciplines whose subjects were taught in secondary schools to recommend how their courses should be taught. Members of the American Historical Association (AHA), which was established in 1886, participated in the project. Political scientists, per se, did not participate because the American Political Science Association was not to be founded until 1903. It should be noted, however, that Woodrow Wilson who was later to serve as President of the American Political Science Association sat on the AHA Committee of Ten. The Committee of Ten made recommendations about teaching history, civil government, and political economy. This sequence of events ensured that the public school curricula regarding civic education would be studied and shaped before political scientists organized a national professional association.

The Committee of Ten was not the sole guiding force in the early design of public school civic education curricula that later came to be known as the social studies. A succession of additional committees, each named by the number of its members, built upon the 1894 recommendations. In 1896 the AHA appointed a Committee of Seven whose 1899 report promoted history as important in cultivating "intelligent citizens." Continuing their educational activities, the AHA appointed a Committee of Eight in 1905 whose 1909 report

offered recommendations about teaching history in the elementary grades. This report encouraged combining history, literature, and geography at the elementary levels.

But political scientists or professors of government were neither part of these deliberations nor were they concerned with staking out a territory for the study of government or politics in the public schools. Political scientists were concerned with something more immediate, staking out a place for themselves in higher education and acquiring a professional identity with the growth and development of their national professional association. A generalization that social scientists sometimes offer in explaining institutional inertia seems appropriate here: It is less difficult to constitute an institution, in this case the public school curricula, than it is to change it. The academic disciplines that were absent when the contemporary social studies and civic education courses of study were instituted have subsequently remained marginal to them.

Political Science as Science

If historical timing prevented the American Political Science Association from participating in the design of elementary civic education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, developments within political science following World War II worked against any later contributions of political scientists to elementary civic education. Prior to World War II the study of political science was more properly called the study of government. It attended, for the most part, to formalistic and legalistic characteristics of governments. Political scientists were often political progressives who envisioned the eventual spread of democracy throughout the world, but the rise of Fascism and Naziism shattered these beliefs. During World War II many political scientists acquired direct governmental experience in Washington. What they learned

convinced them that government operated quite differently from their academic formal and legal descriptions. These events combined with the new and developing technologies of survey research, digital computing, and multivariate statistical analysis laid the foundations for what was later to be heralded as a science of the study of politics.

The conversion of American political scientists from formalistic and legalistic studies to a "scientific" study of politics is known as the "behavioral revolution." This revolution stretched, very roughly, from 1950 to 1970. Here are two characterizations of what happened.

> In general the behavioral persuasion tries to develop rigorous research designs and to apply precise methods of analysis to political behavior problems. In its methodological orientation it is concerned with problems of experimental or post facto design, reliability of instruments and criteria of validation, and other features of scientific procedure. Its function as I see it, is to produce reliable propositions about politics by reducing error, which involves the invention of appropriate tactics of research, and by measuring error that remains through the application of relevant statistical techniques....It represents an attitude of mind, a persuasion as I have called it, that takes nothing for granted and accepts as valid only the results of inquiry. (Eulau, 1964, pp. 34-5)

> While theory building must begin with the establishment of existing fact, political facts may be significant only insofar as they are connected with other facts to form laws or generalizations. A major purpose of political research is to find such connections. When we have accumulated an adequate number of laws and significant concepts, it is generally useful to arrange this material into an axiomatic system or theory. (Ulmer, 1961, p. 2)

Political scientists gradually adopted the norms and goals of logical empiricism, the then-fashionable approach to philosophy of science. This change in professional outlook resulted in a considerable amount of interpersonal animosity and hostility within the profession, but it was eventually consolidated as a result of generational change through the retirement of many political scientists combined with their replacement by a

younger generation of scholars who had been trained in newer approaches to analysis and investigation.

One implication of this shift to a scientific study of politics is particularly relevant to the silence of political scientists on civic education: A science of politics cannot also be an applied technology. This is a problem that professional educators also face and have yet to articulate or address in any sustained manner: how to arrange and manage the complexities of combining scientific research and educational practice. According to the view of science reflected in the quotations from Eulau and Ulmer, scientific research is concerned with "discovering" laws of nature without being contaminated by social and political values. But the issues are a bit more complex than this. The following comments provide some elaboration.

If political scientists were to prescribe a course of study or approaches to elementary civic education, that is tell educators what they should do, then their prescriptions would be the conclusions of arguments and their knowledge of politics, that is propositions and generalizations about political and governmental phenomena, would be the premises for such arguments. The arguments would be deductive. Salmon (1973) describes the relationship between the premises and conclusion of a correct deductive argument like this: "All of the information . . . in the conclusion . . . [is] already contained, at least implicitly, in the premises." (p. 14) Given this facet of a valid argument, political scientists, in their role as scientists, quite rightly refuse to answer questions about elementary civic education. To do so would be to construct an incorrect, invalid, and fallacious argument.

The nature of this fallacy is easily explained. The task political scientists set for themselves is to construct scientific theories of politics. Scientific theories are factual, descriptive, and explanatory; scientific

theories are not evaluative, normative, or prescriptive. It is not possible, therefore, to construct a valid argument that begins with scientific knowledge claims that are factual and conclude with prescriptions for action that are normative and evaluative.

An argument about what elementary civic education ought to be that is derived from what is known about politics or government or education is on its face mistaken whether it is put forward by a political scientist or someone else. This fallacy can be turned into a valid argument simply enough, a statement of value or a series of value statements can be added to the premises of the argument. If that is done, values will be found in the premises and conclusions; and if the argument is otherwise correct and logical, one can no longer be accused of falsely deriving values from facts. But this solution creates another problem. It is not the job of political scientists, in the view of science endorsed by Eulau and Ulmer, to promote values or to endorse such commitments. Their job is to provide "scientific" knowledge of politics and government.

This is a naive view of science according to many (see Chalmers, 1974 for one discussion of naive inductionism) because arguments are more complicated than this. The application of formal logic to symbolic notations (artificial languages) and the argument forms they depict can be quite precise but the precision erodes when the symbolic notations are interpreted by natural language (English, French, etc.) statements. The imprecision of natural languages makes it difficult to characterize what constitutes validity. (See Quine, 1953 for an important, decisive, and classic argument on the problems of analyticity and synonomy in science and deductive arguments.) Furthermore Searle (1969), among others, has shown that natural language statements are always "contaminated," as it were, by values.

A short illustration. Is the statement, "An extra fancy red apple is (X), (Y), and (Z)," where (X), (Y), and (Z) stand for three defining characteristics, factual or evaluative? The statement is both factual and evaluative. The statement defines the factual characteristics of a class of apples and evaluates the class as more or less desirable depending upon one's preference for apples, say, of a particular size, firmness, and color. Searle's more general point is that speech is action--this line of thinking is labelled speech act theory. If speech is action then speech includes value components for the simple reason that actions can only result from decisions and decisions cannot be made without reference to values or decision criteria.

These issues and problems are relevant to linking disciplinary knowledge and civic education because disciplinary knowledge claims are speech acts and are evaluative and normative as well as factual, descriptive, and explanatory. Disciplines separate knowledge claims into those that are thought to be more important from those that are less important. The normative basis, however, for these disciplinary judgments is almost never made explicit or contested. Because the importance of an observation or theory can only be determined against a decision criteria or standard of some sort, disciplinary judgments reflect and reproduce deep, often unarticulated commitments and interests. Unexamined disciplinary knowledge promotes, in a very straightforward way, social and political commitments because the political practices and organizations under investigation are uncritically reproduced in words.

Back to Searle and speech act theory. If values are always present in factual descriptions then, Searle has argued, it is possible to derive in a logically valid manner what one ought to do from what is and thereby avoid the fallacy described earlier. Because speech is action, statements of factual premises also contain value commitments. These original values and

commitments, implicit in the facutal premises of the argument, can then be retrieved in the conclusion of the argument. An argument that was once thought of as fallacious, deriving an ought from an is, is not necessarily incorrect after all. It is instead simply reproductive of the dominant values of the disciplined investigation and the phenomena studied. If this tack is taken in linking disciplinary knowledge to civic education, then there is the danger that the partial ideology of a profession, to use Eco's (1984, pp. 83-84) term, will remain unexamined and be promoted as global.

This is the dilemma, then, that faces political scientists who would advise on civic education. On one hand, if they promote values and commitments they abandon their "objective" stance as scientists. On the other hand, if they simply offer factual descriptions, explanations, and theories they promote the values and commitments that led to the production of whatever knowledge they have to offer and the values that make the political phenomena possible in the first place. The upshot is that neither political scientists nor other disciplinary experts in the social sciences or humanities or sciences are in a privileged position to offer advice about civic education. Civic education is a civic and educational matter. Political scientists can answer specific questions but their answers, however, are to questions posed by educators and others. Political scientists as scientists are little more than technicians when questions of civic education are raised--not unlike the role of educational psychologists, for example, when they are requested to consider the design and execution of civic education.

Historically it is not surprising that political scientists as professionals have not expressed interest in nor offered opinions about elementary civic education given that the development of elementary social studies education at the turn of the century preceded the founding of the

American Political Science Association. Scientifically, given the scientific turn that was taken by political scientists in the decades following World War II, it is not surprising that political scientists have adopted the role of scientists and have refrained from expressing substantive opinions about educational policy and practice. To their credit, however, political scientists have not promoted as global and impartial the implicit partial ideologies embedded in their professional work. As someone with an interest in curriculum and civic education I take the liberty of adding a few comments.

On Civic Education

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines civic as, "of or relating to a citizen, a city, citizenship, or civil affairs," and civil as, "of or related to the state and its citizenry." Visions of the desired state, community, or polis are required in order to discuss, design, or execute a program in civic education. But visions of the desired state or community are not scientific explanations or theories. Images of what is desired are not just descriptions and explanations of things or events as they are but as they might be. Civic education requires conceptions of justice, liberty, equality--conceptions of what is good and evil. A science of politics has little connection to any of this. A science of politics is in business to describe and explain. Accurately. The place of vision in science is reduced to or enhanced to, as you wish, improving accuracy in the search for and expression of deep structures in and regularities among phenomena.

The following brief comments on civic education are guided by commitments to human dignity and community, to social justice and equality, and to liberal democracy. Political scientists would be the first to point out that these sweeping terms have been described in many different ways. Some of these descriptions are excessively general and ambiguous, others directly contradict

each other. Simply put, many of the values implied by this and many other orientations, for that matter, are not compatible.

A brief example: Freedom and equality do not track together (see Sabine, 1952 for a different discussion of freedom and equality). If people are free to choose and in exercising the option of choice choose to be different, social and material inequalities often result. Some of these inequalities cumulate over time. Some of these inequalities restrict liberties and freedoms. To summarize, liberty and freedom often produce inequalities; inequalities often restrict freedoms; and social coercion in the form of restricting choices is sometimes required in order to limit social inequalities. Issues such as this get complicated quickly. But such complexity is yet another premise for the design of civic education.

Here are four suggestions about civic education.

1. Students should learn about important characteristics of liberal democracy and its historical development. For example, they should learn that popular sovereignty, freedom of expression, and universal suffrage, among other characteristics, are central to liberal democracy as we know it today.

> Students should learn to read very carefully the texts of their society and the texts of other societies, they should learn to tell the stories within the stories of their society. (See Cherryholmes, 1988, chapters 4 and 8 for a more general argument along these lines.)

2. Students should learn that the development of liberal democracy in the United States has been flawed and oppressive as well as liberating and enlightening: Slavery existed in the United States until the second half of the 19th century; women could not vote until 1921; blacks were legally discriminated against in voting and almost all other aspects of social life

until the 1960s. But the development of democracy in the United States has generally been in the direction of being more and more socially inclusive and less and less exclusive, not without occasional missteps however. Students should learn to interpret developments in the United States within the context of our world and critically appraise them. (See Cherryholmes, 1988, chapter 8 for an elaboration of these ideas.)

Students should learn to interpret and criticize (deconstruct) our social and political texts; that is, they should learn to tell stories upon and against the stories in our culture, society, and politics.

3. Students should draw upon political scientific knowledge in the consumption and production of texts about their social and political world. Political scientists can provide detailed accounts of the United States government and its operation, relations among nations, comparative political systems, and political thought, among other things. More specifically political and other social scientists have developed theories and models of decision making, communication, learning, power, and cooperation that may be useful to students in understanding and making their way in society. (See Cherryholmes and Manson, et al., 1979 for applications of these theories and models in an elementary social studies textbook series.)

Students should learn authoritative descriptions and explanations of the structure and operation of our social and political system.

4. Students should be taught that social and political life and practices are complex, contradictory, and transitory. They should learn that all of us are continually creating anew our society and way of life. Students should be encouraged to think of these issues in broad pragmatic terms: We believe and act on the basis of the anticipated consequences of our beliefs and actions.

Students should learn that these consequences include aesthetic, ethical, and material outcomes--all of which should be considered. Civic education should produce students who think of themselves as critical pragmatists who are engaged in building communities that privilege human dignity. (See Cherryholmes, 1988 for an extended discussion of critical pragmatism and education.)

> Students should think of themselves as critical pragmatists who are building communities and ways of living where human dignity is privileged.

References

Chalmers. A. F. (1974). What is This Thing Called Science? London: University of Queensland Press.

Cherryholmes, Cleo H. (1988). Power and Criticism: Poststructural Investigations in Education. New York and London: Teachers College Press.

Cherryholmes, Cleo H., Gary Manson, et al. (1979). McGraw-Hill Social Studies. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Eco, Umberto. (1984). Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Eulau, Heinz. (1964). The Behavioral Persuasion in Politics. New York: Random House.

Quine, W. V. O. (1953). From a Logical Point of View. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Ulmer, Sidney. (Ed.). (1961). Introductory Readings in Political Behavior. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Sabine, George. (1952). "The Two Democratic Traditions." The Philosophical Review. 61 (October, 1952), 451-474.

Salmon, Wesley. (1973). Logic Second Edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Searle, John. (1969). Speech Acts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.